

SATURDAY, OCT. 26, 1872.

Subject: The Past and the Future.

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PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

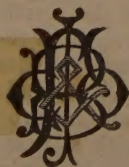
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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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THE PAST AND THE FUTURE.

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded."—PHIL. III: 12-15.

This letter of Paul's was among the last that he wrote. There is reasonable evidence to believe that he was in prison for the last time before his execution, under the dominion of Nero. Although the letter is not sad, there is in it a strain of that tenderness which one might almost call funereal. In no other letter are there so many abounding terms of affection. The disciples of Christ never before seemed so dear to him; and yet you will observe that although it was now a period of helplessness, increasing and nearly approaching death, instead of attempting to recapitulate and rejoice over the services of the past, he expressly dissuades men from that course. He declares that that which occupies his mind is not the recapitulation of all his past experience and service, but that his life lies yet forward of him. And he introduces that figure, which was a living one then, but which is merely a classical illustration now, of the racers, who when they are in the circuit, and are performing their feats in competition, reach forward, in their rushing intensity, with both body and arms, and think of nothing—neither that which is in the present nor that which is behind—but are measuring the distance before them, with their eyes fixed upon it, and are straining every nerve each to touch the goal first. So it was with this spirit. Instead of congratulating itself on past experiences, and going over and over and over again the history of former days, though he was an old man, broken by much labor and suffering, crushed by chains, imprisoned between soldiers, and standing on the verge of death,—in this last estate, when if at any time anybody might feed upon the reminiscences of the past, Paul now might,—his soul lies itself up in its nobility,

and says, "Not that I have attained, and am perfect; but *this one thing I do*, I press forward." There is that significant but not well-understood expression here.

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended in Christ Jesus."

It is as if he had said, "Christ is the ideal of what a man should be. He has my ideal portrait, as it were, drawn out in his own thought and feeling. There is an exaltation and a grandeur for myself in the time to come, which Christ knows and I do not; but I am following after. I am pressing up toward that thought which Christ has, of what I am and ought to be; and I am determined that I will apprehend it as Christ himself does. Not that I have it; but I will strive for it. My manhood is in the future. My life lies beyond the present."

Yet, we are not to understand, here, or elsewhere, that cautions against going back into the past are dissuasions from the use of memory as an auxiliary in the Christian life, or as an auxiliary to comfort. For, in other places, we have the most pointed exhortations to remember; not to forget; to call to remembrance. The Hebrews, to whom Paul was mainly writing, had, in their very national customs, symbols and instructions which were designed to carry men back to past histories, and to profit them by the observations of things gone by, but freshly recalled to memory.

All the future, in some sense, has its roots in the past. We cannot ignore the past, and live wholly in the future. If we were stripped of the ability to remember, we should never be civilized. The power to convert past things to present uses, and present things to future uses, measures the civilizing force of men and nations.

On the other hand, this is a noble protest against the tendency of men who have acquired possessions and achieved success, to cease growing; to look at the past as a great granary in which is stored enough of the fruit of life to warrant their sitting down and contenting themselves with things already accomplished. It is a dissuasion from ignoble contentment in things attained; and from going back to that which is past as a ground of excuse for present inactivity, or for a lack of enterprise in the future.

It may besit a silk-worm, when it has gnawed its little leaf, to roll itself up in a cocoon of silken threads, spun out of its own body; but it is poor business for anything but a silk-worm. It is poor business for a man to roll himself up, and spin out of his past achievements that which shall form his own covering.

The past is to be used as a medicine or as a wine, but not as a food. It may furnish reasons for gratitude when we look back in all the way in which God has led us—upon our childhood; upon the household in which we were reared; upon our near and dear friends; upon our friendships and loves; upon our successes; upon those experiences in which the providence of God has been manifest to us. The long retrospect may oftentimes fill the soul with vivid emotions of thanksgiving. It may also breed a trust in God for times to come. It may lift one out of discouragements. It may minister hope in great exigencies. And for such purposes as these it is eminently wise and proper for one to look back and use the past. We are not absolutely to forget the things that are behind. It is only relatively that we are to do this. Going back may be a means of guidance and of caution.

The sins that are in the past should not have been committed in vain; for although sin as our master is to be dreaded and shunned, yet when we have once passed through the experience of it, we ought so to use it that it shall serve us and minister to our benefit.

Our mistakes; the partialisms of our life; all its imperfections—these things should have a part of meditation at times and in due measure. For the past life would be lost in some of its best elements, if we did not from it learn how to take a better course in time to come. Every man's past life should be his critic, his censor, his guide. He who lives, and is done with life the moment it drops hour by hour from his hands, is not half a man. He is like a plucked plant that stands in water without roots of its own, and can have no growth, and soon fades and passes away.

The past should be as a granary from which we are to take seeds to plant for new harvests.

It may be, too, at times, a refuge. The house of memory may be a hiding-place where present trouble cannot find us. Memory may be that pavilion where God hides his beloved until the storm be overpast. If the way be too great for us; if the burdens be heavier than we can bear; if the horizon be shut in, and the darkness is above and about, it is better that we should retreat backward to the land of light in former times, and dwell there a while rather than give up in discouragement and own that we are vanquished. Overcome, is what men should never be. If the present be full of temptation and trial, go out of it. It is better to go forward; but if the way be shut up before you, go backward. Go anywhere rather than dwell in darkness. Ye are children of light. Let worms be crushed; let insects perish; but let men

never yield to despair. You carry God in you. It is not for you to be overshadowed and darkened and overcome. There are fine gates behind, and the gates before; and if it be needful, go back into the past, and gather up all its memories of joys gone by, and weave out of them some flowers that shall be fragrant; and by and by, when you return again to the present duties of life, it may be that the storm will be past, and that the horizon will appear again with a hopeful light.

But there is a use of the past which is full of danger to manliness. It is seductive, persuasive, but mischievous. To many, the past is a land of despondency. Some are soured all their life long on account of an experience gone by. Their childhood was blighted. It is a melancholy utterance of men, when, now and then, they say, "I never was a child." One of the saddest things that I see in the street is little children that never have been children—boys prematurely sharp; keen when they are five years old; cunning; self-caring; preying upon each other, with their little hands lifted in the great battle against life—children that are not children—homunculi—men dwarfed.

While some look back along the way of life and rejoice in the household, it having been a palace of treasures to them, how many there are who look upon a spoiled childhood, ugly parents, hard selfishness, indigence, toil, and trouble! How many look back to see many elements of error instilled into their early manhood! How many, in surveying the past, see things that they did which they would fain leave out if possible, as the murderer would fain obliterate the stain of blood from his hands, but which they cannot get rid of! How many consciences there are among men that are not strong enough to hinder evil, but are strong enough to turn back and sting them for it! How many consciences there are which, when they have once got possession of a man, hold on to him, and torment him! The past—how full is it of sins which have left their mark; sins that often rise up and stalk like ghosts in men's sensitive imaginations and memories; sins which sometimes amount to crimes, and haunt men like fiends! There be those who come back and recount their experiences, and do not choose to exert themselves in the direction of manhood because the future is blocked up by the past.

Now, if there be things to which these words may be applied with more power than to others, they are the crimes, the sins and the misfortunes of the past: "Let the dead bury their dead." And when once the past has buried its dead, let them stay buried, and not come again upon the face of the earth. Who would care to

keep and treasure up all the warts, and scabs, and issues, and ichor, and excrements of his diseased experience through life as if it would do him any good to go and see what sickness had done in a morbid condition of tissue and body? And how much worse it is to keep the soul's morbid conditions in memory, and go back, and go back, and go back to them! Manhood does not lie there. It is not in the review of these mistakes, it is not in profound morbidity, that man ever gets any uplift. No sackcloth will help you. No perpetual crucifixion in view of past transgressions will help you. The best way to deal with your sins is to have a new life. Bury the past in the present and in the future.

There be many who brood over their sorrows and misfortunes and failures and things lost. There be many who wander up and down in the passages of their past life, as a single traveler wanders through an empty house that is full of rooms, with no company nor light nor warmth. They are forever complaining—forever bemoaning the troubles of the past. And so to them memory is a chamber of torments—a place of cruel bondage—an Egypt.

I have sometimes come out from wanderings in the fields, and seen, lying, coiled up and swollen, a serpent, which all men instinctively seem to abhor, and in whose mouth was some helpless toad or frog, that had not been able nimbly to escape him. The victim which he had half swallowed, he was still swallowing, and swallowing, and swallowing, till it was gone. And so, toad-like, many and many a one lies helpless in the jaws of the open-mouthed serpent of the past. Cruel memory, with long struggle, is swallowing them down; until at last they disappear. They are victims of the suffering, and weariness, and wretchedness, and contemptible misery of the past.

Still worse is it when one goes back to the past to find, not grief, nor sorrow, but lazy contentment—contentment with himself; contentment with his manhood; contentment with the pitiful things which he has earned. As if a man was represented simply by the little that he does! As if any amount of learning, or any amount of public service, or any amount of merchandise, or any amount of labor in any profession, or any amount of accumulation, was a fair representative of the God that is in you or me! As if in our lower and cruder states, in our half-developed life, we could do anything that would be a fit measure of the manhood which Christ thought of, and by which we were apprehended of him, and which we should strive to apprehend in him! As if the servile tasks, as if all the things which we have done with labor-pains and throes, during our past life, were a fit memorial or monument of the divin-

ity that is in us! As if they were a pigment fit to paint our portraits with!

If I am only that which I have been, I am of all men most miserable. If I am only that which, in a crude way of thinking and believing, the past seems to me; if I am merely a creature storm-thrown, cast hither and thither, with endless oscillations, without symmetry or proportions, harassed, hatched, oftentimes beaten down, speckled, spotted, decayed, such as I have been in the past, then I am hardly worth saving. I am better worth burying. I am no better than a leaf, and no better than the bug that is on it. But that is not the case with me.

What Lord Bacon was when his nurse stood him up by the side of a chair, and he tumbled headlong down; what Lord Bacon was in all the little noisome infelicities of his youth, did not measure what Lord Bacon became in his philosophical largeness. And as the intellection of children is no criterion by which to judge of their manhood in later years; so what a man has been is no sign of what he is to be. Oh! what power lies buried in you that you know not of. Oh! what light lies waiting to burst through the orient imagination which yet has never streamed forth. Oh! what treasures, what loves, what fortitudes, what sweetnesses, what glories are buried in the human soul, which future possibilities shall develop.

The past is no safe ground; and yet there are those who sit mumbling their satisfaction. They boast of what they have done. They have made fortunes. They have scraped in money—they are not careful to recount how! They have built warehouses. They have invented this, that or the other thing. And so they sit piping about themselves as if the world had been sustained to keep them up, and as if the little that they had done here and there was a fit theme for their everlasting meditation.

A man is a fool who sits looking backward for himself in the past. Ah! what shallow vain conceit there is in men! Forget the things that are behind. That is not where you live. Your roots are not there. They are in the present; and you should reach up into the other life.

So men often use service in the past as a just claim or release from service in the future. While the blood flows warm in them, and while enterprise is impetuous, men labor; but as they come to mid-life, or begin to take hold upon later years, they say: "I have done my share; I have had my time; I will give place to younger men. It is not for me to go on forever. I have done great works; I have served well my day and generation; and now I will step aside."

When God is tired, you have a right to be tired, and not till then. You are of him. Your best and truest self is divine; and in that there is no weariness, no variableness, no shadow of turning. When flame ceases to blaze upward, it ceases to be flame. When coals cease to glow, they go to ashes. When men cease to plan a life of activity for all their noblest powers, decadence has begun. There should be no remission to labor. The last thing a man does—even dying—should be positive; and one should *step out*. All our true manhood is living, is active; it feeds on the future. And not what we have been, not what we are, but what we shall be, should fill our minds with a generous aspiration, as well as with a generous discontent for all our past achievements.

“When He who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

God is an artist, and we do not know what he is doing. When stores are being built, and they are making them beautiful inside, an inclosure of boards is often put about them, so that no man may see what is going on there, until by and by, when they take down the boards, the beautiful carving or frescoing shines out suddenly.

God works behind screens, and we do not know what he is doing, either in ourselves or in others. “It doth not yet appear.” There are a great many things done in us our experience of which is no testimony of what their real nature is. It is not in the nascent state, it is not in the sprouting condition, that we know the nature of flowers or fruits, but in their ultimate states. God is working in men “to will and to do of his good pleasure;” but what that working means we can tell only in the long future. Our life lies beyond; and every man should feel the sacred inspiration, and press forward. We are saved by hope.

This leads me to say that the sources of activity and continued fruitfulness are in the future. It is by throwing forward the mind into new fields that we maintain freshness in its faculties. It is by giving it swing that its wings grow strong to soar up to the very sun.

Every year trees slough their leaves, and never know their own children any more. Though they do daintily nourish them all summer, and hold them in their bosom, and listen to their song; though through them they, in autumn days like these, grow radiant, and heaven is reflected from their boughs in all its glory, yet soon they cast them off, and throw them to the ground, and give them to the winds, and let them decay, and never mourn for them, nor call them back again. Nor do they know that they have had them, as they sleep through the winter with germs of

other leaves in them, which shall be pushed forth when the spring calls to remembrance their life again.

Every man's days of achievement should every year be cast from him; he should let them go, and they should be forgotten, that new days and new achievements may come forth, meaning growth, and indicating expansion.

Even when the branches are bare, as ere long they shall be; when the tree stands in winter self-contained, life is still going on secretly, and it is preparing to bear again. And whether your boughs are bare, or are lean and unclothed, still let life be going on in you. Live much when it is summer, and still live when the winter is on you.

He is truly a man who is in full enterprise; who is perpetually planning new works; who is constantly acquiring new thoughts; who is all the time opening new chambers; who is every day furnishing the rooms of his mind with new pictures and new furniture; who is incessantly spreading for himself a new table with noble aspirations and endeavors, as the sign of soul-life. Every man who really lives is living by a generous use of the future.

Then again, those faculties by which we look into the future take hold of things unseen. The most precious parts of the human mind are the furthest from the animal passions and appetites, and the nearest to the spiritual. The finest, noblest, highest form of reason—reason idealized by the imagination; all the more subtle elements which seem to have power almost to comprehend the reality which lies beyond the present in the great spirit-world—these are the faculties by which we live in the future, and thus take hold of things yet unaccomplished, educating the best part of our nature, and building us up more than we know.

For these and many other reasons that time would fail me to tell, Christian brethren, let me renew the exhortation of the apostle, and say to you: "Forget the things that are behind, and press forward to those things which are before." O man in youth, in mid-life, or in age, to whom has come comparative quiescence; O thou that by discouragements or by a treacherous quietude and restfulness art ceasing tasks and labors, and going out with less and less alacrity morning by morning; O thou shrinking soul, growing small by disease, and, like an apple long kept, shriveling to a leather-like insipidity, to you comes this word of God! It is not for you to stand content in your present condition; it is not for you to reckon your whole life as treasured up in the past: it is for you, if you be a true man, touched by the Spirit of

God, never to cease activity. Let your blood start again. Teach your heart to beat once more with its old pulsations, and live to bring out of the great treasure-house of things unattempted and unaccomplished more blessed results than have been known before.

There have been men who, when they have reached fifty or fifty-five years of age, have said: "Now I am on the down-hill side of life, and it is not for me to attempt much;" and yet, there has come to them some inspiration, some rousing, some impetus, divine and blessed, and they have begun again; and in the last quarter of a century their life has done more than it did in all the rest of their days put together. Is it wise for a man, whose mind has been tempered, who has knowledge that has come from experience, and who has been made strong by long enduring—is it wise for such a man to throw away the education of his whole life? Is it wise that his experience and knowledge should be applied to nothing, and that he should do nothing?

We do not blame the early blossoming plants, that they stand with empty stalks in summer. This may do for plants; but for a man to stand like a last year's mullein-stalk, doing little or nothing, is a shame. He was born of the dust, and he is dust himself—not a man.

O lazy old men; O non-ambitious middle-aged men; O dainty, melancholy, sentimental young men, who are talking about life's being almost done, shake the bough of the tree again! Bring down more fruit. Open the furrows once more. Cast in the seed of new endeavors. Live again! for you are active only when you are thinking, planning, executing, bearing, suffering. Never whine. Leave whining for the dogs. You are a son of God. You were not whelped, to be a son of the gutter. Live on. Live forward, sloughing infirmity, sloughing sins, sloughing crimes, and the memory of them, if they hold you down. Stretch out hands of aspiration. Reach after new thoughts and new aspirations.

It is never too late to mend. It is never too late to begin again. It is never too late to sow. It is never too late to reap. Go through life with the reaper's song in your mouth; and when you die carry your sheaves with you to heaven.

There is many a household that needs this same word of exhortation. There is many a desponding family where grief dwells in over familiarity. There is many a one that is saying, "It is too late in life to build again." Why should one have schoolmasters sent to him—and mistakes are schoolmasters; why should one have prophets sent to him—and sins are prophets and interpreters of

God's will; why should one have all infirmities and non-accomplishments sent to him—and these infirmities and non-accomplishments speak to us out of the past, and become to us seers of the future; why should one have all these things, and derive no benefit from them? Is there discord and trouble in your household? Have darkness and gloom settled over it? Have many treasures been taken out of it? Do the lights which have long illuminated it burn dimly? Nevertheless, O father and mother, or orphan children, build again that household! Do not be weary. Do not despond. Despair is the devil to you. Hope is God's voice to you, saying, "It is never too late to build again." Hope on; hold on; love on; live on; for there is a life of the household which lies before you yet.

You have no power in that which is past. Life that is lived stands ghastly as a grave-stone. You cannot change it a particle. You cannot wipe out a deed. You cannot obliterate a fact. You cannot alter the proportion of a single element. But the future is mutable. It is as plastic as clay in the hand of the artist. With the future anything can be done if you but have the heart to do it. Then build out of the future. Quarry in its mines. Bring from it materials for your wants and uses.

And that which is true of the individual and of the family is eminently true of the church. Christian brethren, it has pleased God to give us in the week past one of the most remarkable experiences which it has been vouchsafed to any church ever to have. We have been led as his people of old were led, not knowing what should befall us from day to day. A quarter of a century has rounded up its period, and we have been permitted to have a week of spiritual rejoicing. We have called up the past, and reviewed its experiences. God grant that this week may be a granary out of which shall come seed for new and better growths in years to come. This church is young. It has just begun to work. It has just begun to learn the use of its hands. It has just begun to syllable the name of "Father." Oh what enterprise, oh what power, oh what vigilance and intensity of combined labors are before this church, if it is only faithful! This church should be kindled as a light. It should supply a warmth at which the shivering and chilled hearts of men may warm themselves. And in the future more abundantly than in the past should it be a blessing to those who come under its influence. When so much as now did we know the great bounty of our God? When so much as now was the heart of Jesus Christ so well understood? When were there as many praying mothers and praying fathers as there are now? When were there

so many laborers—young men and maidens—as there are to-day? When has there been so much experience in gathering, and in winning those who are gathered, as now? And shall all this equipage, shall all these accomplishments, shall this multitudinous experience be stored up, and shall we write upon them as upon a tomb, “DEAD”?

No, no! Forgetting the things that are behind, except as a spur to future achievements, look forward. Pray to-day and every day, labor to-day and every day, for the future of this church; and cease not to seek to win souls from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the kingdom and glory and beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That which is true of the church is true also of the nation and of the world. The days of darkness and bondage and suffering are fast passing away. The whole creation has groaned and travailed in pain until now; but it shall not be so always. Already some single notes break in.

In summer I wake up at four o’clock in the morning, or earlier, and often listen to the sounds of twilight that are beginning to come on. By and by I hear some uneasy bird stir her mate; and a little complaining note breaks out—a mere twitter. Then there is a little louder sound. And then there is another more outspoken yet. This wakes up a dozen other songsters; and one sounds out his note, and another his note, and another his note. And at last every shrub, and every tree, and all the fields are full of joyful noises, and the whole heaven is not big enough to contain the sweet and musical racket.

The world has heard some few notes. The morning is dawning over the mountain. Here a bird sings, and there a bird. But we have not had the outburst. The choral song is yet to come. It draws near. The world yet, instead of groaning and travailing in pain, shall lift up its voice, full of cheer and solemnity, and rejoice, so that in heaven and all the universe the redeemed shall chant the praise of Him who loved the world, and saved it, and perfected it.

In that high enterprise you have enlisted. Therefore work. Work in faith, in hope, and in love. Work living, and work dying. Living or dying, ye are the Lord’s.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE draw near to thee, Eternal Father, and God of all the earth, for the refreshment of thy Spirit, and for that instruction by which we shall know ourselves, and be lifted up into some conception of sonship. How glad must thou be, since we are so glad when our children come home, in the coming to thee of thine own! Though they come in feebleness, and often as the prodigal came; though they come bearing the marks of hard usage in their wanderings, yet they are thine. Every heart that palpitates is thine. Every soul that yearns is thine. Every one on whom evil is stamped is thine; and every one that wrestles therewith, and is emerging toward something better, is thine. There are none so vile that thou canst not find good in them by which thou mayest work out benefit; and there are none so good that, if they should measure themselves by that which is good in thy sight, they would not seem altogether unholy and impure. We rejoice that thou dost embrace all in the arms of thy thought and thy providence and thy mercy; and that none escape thee—not the poor; not the most obscure; not the hidden; not those that are out of the way. We rejoice that thy sun shines on the evil and on the good, and that thy rain falls on the just and on the unjust. We rejoice that nature is serving those, whatever be their estate or case, who are thine—and all are thine. And we rejoice that thy grace is yet more ample than the gifts and the bounties which come through nature. And we pray that we may not be so foolish as to cast aside these proffered mercies of God, and to cast ourselves from thee. As those that live in caves, and are shut out from the light of the sun, though it is summer, grant that we may not hide ourselves from the light of the Sun of Righteousness, and go back, so as not to have that power and comfort of love manifested toward us which issues forth from thee. May we not be afraid to look down into ourselves and see what mischief is there. May we not be afraid of the hour of sickness. May we not be afraid of pain. May we know that there is a Physician to whom we can go, who hath no reproach in his lip, and no severity in his hand, and who will dwell with us for health; and that if there be pain, it is a pain which breeds joy by and by.

Grant that every one of us may strive to know his own state, and make application to thee, and receive grace to help in time of need.

We thank thee for that encouragement which we have derived from our own experience. We are witnesses of thy goodness. We look back through years that are filled with the memories of God's mercy. How many fears, as now we look back upon them, that were set to terrify us, and to smite us down to the ground, do we see to have been false prophets! How didst thou overthrow them, and with victorious hope and joy sustain us when we expected downfall or death! How many discouragements have been rolled out of the way! How many times, when we have found it impossible to go forward for the lions, hast thou stopped the mouths of the lions! How many times, when the wilderness was tangled, and we could not find our way, has thy voice guided us out of the entanglements, and planted our feet in a large place, filled with light and peace! The soul that rests in thee is convoyed safely through every peril, and is lifted up out of every trouble. In every darkness there is a light dawning.

In thee, O Lord, are all things. Thou art all in all. And we rejoice in thee. And as our past experience hath testified to thine unwearying goodness, so we desire now, for the future, not to take thy name upon our lips alone, but to be re-affianced to thee. We desire to give love to thee, and to unite our souls to thine. We desire to be one with thee, as thou art one with the Father. Fill us, we pray thee, with thy Spirit, that we may overcome

temptation, and cast away easily-besetting sins, and rise higher than our present condition. By the power of faith may we discern the invisible. May we see the glory of God, and all the blessedness therein which lies undeveloped before us. May we live by faith and hope, and reach forward toward that which is beyond, rejoicing in the revelation that yet one day shall be brought unto us.

If any are discouraged in Christian living, we pray that thou wilt speak very mercifully unto them, and that thou wilt breathe hope upon their despondency, and light upon their darkness, and strength upon their weakness.

If any are burdened with troubles and cares, may they find that God is more than a Saviour to them. Be thou a cross to them; and when they shall have given themselves willingly to it, give them life and strength and support therein.

We beseech of thee that those may find comfort in thee this morning who find comfort in no other source. Be very near to them. Be very nourishing to their souls. May they feel that the wings of God are above them. If the darkness is great, it is but the concealment of his brooding. And grant that they may never feel so near to thee as when they are in trouble.

We pray that thou wilt comfort all those who in the allotments of thy providence are sufferers in any wise. Enlighten those who are perplexed and doubtful in mind. Guide those who have lost the way, and are backslidden. Release those who are in captivity. Break all bonds. Open prison doors. Give liberty to spiritual captives on every side, and bring them forth rejoicing as emancipated spirits.

We thank thee for all the mercies which thou hast bestowed upon this church and congregation. Accept our thanks for all the things which thou hast done to it, and through it to the world, in the past. We look back upon them with gratitude. But we desire to turn our eyes away from overmuch looking upon that which has been in the past to that which is now before us. May we enter upon new labors. May we enterprise better things. May we not be content to garner praise, and sit quiet in our places. What are all the things of the past but a motive and a guidance to things greater and purer and nobler, for the cause of God and the welfare of men?

Grant that we may feel how great is the glory and the joy which we have in Christ Jesus. May we have his spirit so beating in us evermore that all the world shall seem as a host of ourselves. All the things that the sun above us brings forth—may we feel, as we touch them, that we touch our Father's things, and that they are ours because we are the sons of God. And all men, in all nations—may we call them kindred, and feel the divine love in our hearts and in theirs uniting us together.

We pray, O Lord, that thy mercies may abound more and more. May revivals of religion prevail through all the land. Grant that schools may spring up everywhere, that the darkness of ignorance may be driven away, that justice may prevail, and that laws may be straightened, and their administration become more and more pure. We thank thee that thou art turning back the iniquity of unjust judges, and bringing the abominations of wickedness upon the heads of those who wrought it, and purifying the ways of public administration, and re-establishing the institutions of this land in righteousness. May the work go forward.

Grant, we beseech of thee, that men may grow more noble and disinterested. May selfishness slink back again to its den. May pride that works mischief be held in check. May avarice cease.

We pray that thou wilt grant the spirit of true brotherhood to this whole people. May men work together for the things which shall establish justice, truth, intelligence, unity, and universal happiness. And may the power of

this nation be used, not to overthrow the weak, or mislead the blind and ignorant, but to hold them up, and lead them in better ways.

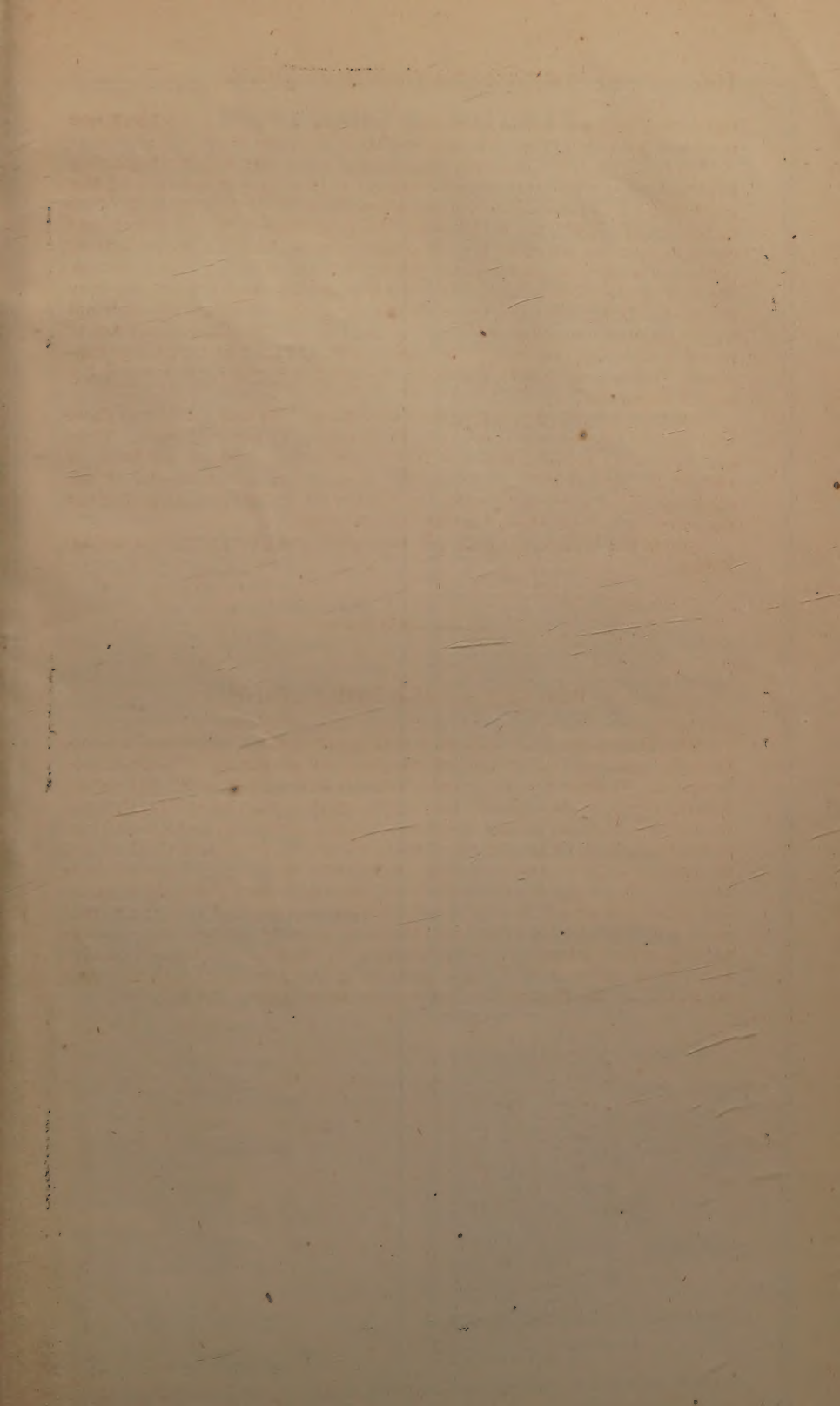
We thank thee, O Lord, for that degree of sympathy which is beginning to obtain among the nations; and we pray that it may be fostered by thy good Spirit and providence. May nations cease to be toward each other as roaming beasts in the wilderness. We pray that thou wilt grant that strength may be borne in love, and that wisdom may be disallied from pride and selfishness, and become the right hand of mercy and goodness. We pray, O God, that nations may learn war no more, and that the day may come, even in our life-time, when all the strength of national life shall not be piled up for defending or for destroying, but shall be made to minister to purity, and knowledge, and justice, and truth, and love, and universal happiness. There is enough in the world to bless the world, if men would bestow it thereunto.

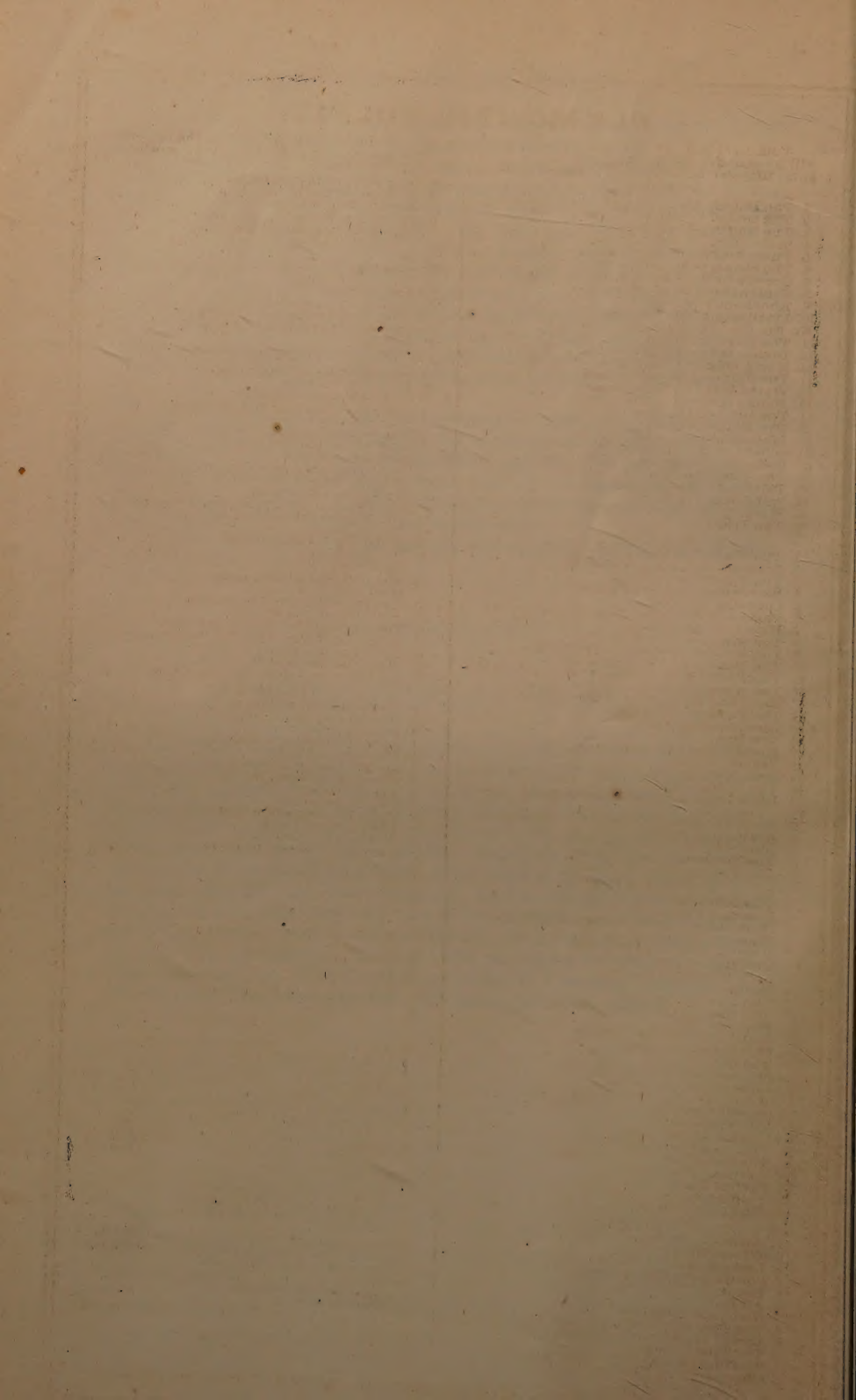
Lord, open blind eyes, soften hard hearts, and lead in a better way those who have so long been stumbling in the darkness of the wilderness. Thou hast promised; yet thou hast not fulfilled; and the ages wait for thee. O that thou dwellest in eternity, bethink thee of our littleness, and of the shortness of our years, and hasten the fulfillment of thy counsels, and of thy promises, that all the earth may see thy salvation.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be praise everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt grant that we may draw wisdom from the past, and inspiration and motive from the future. Thou art ever before us. To thee we lift up our eyes, never looking backward, but always looking forward. Draw us by thine own example, who, for the joy that was set before thee, didst endure the cross, despising the shame, and art set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Grant, we pray thee, comfort and consolation to all who suffer to-day. Give them deliverance from all their troubles. May they rise above them all. By the blessed power of a sanctified imagination, may they take hold of things unseen, and may things that are not be mightier than the things that are. Help us again to sing; dismiss us then with thy blessing. Go home with us. Make every house a place of blessedness and joy. And at last bring us to thy heavenly kingdom. And we will praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*





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